

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Windy Creek and Poorman Creek Road Construction

EA # OR-118-02-25

June 12, 2002

This environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Windy Creek and Poorman Creek road construction was prepared utilizing a systematic interdisciplinary approach integrating the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts with planning and decision making.

Public notice of the availability of the EA is being provided through the BLM Medford District's web site at [www.or.blm.gov/Medford /](http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/) and advertisement in the Grants Pass Courier and the Umpqua Free Press.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT
GLENDALE RESOURCE AREA

EA COVER SHEET

Proposed Action: Issue two short-term right-of-way permits to Superior Lumber Co. to haul logs and construct two permanent roads through BLM managed land in the Windy Creek and Poorman Creek drainages.

Type of Statement: Environmental Assessment (EA)

Lead Agency: USDI Bureau of Land Management

Cooperating Agencies: United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need

1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Glendale Resource Area of the Medford Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to issue two short term right-of-way permits to Superior Lumber Co. for the purposes of hauling logs through two separate locations within BLM O&C managed lands. In Windy Creek, approximately 840 feet of permanent road would be constructed along an existing ridge top fire trail. The location of this road within the Windy Creek drainage is T. 32 S., R. 6 W., Section 24, Douglas County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian. In Poorman Creek, approximately 300 feet of permanent road would be constructed off a BLM ridge road (number 33-7-13.07) to access Superior Lumber Co. owned land. The location of this road within the Poorman Creek drainage is T. 33 S., R. 7 W., Section 23, Douglas County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian. Proposed road construction would occur on Matrix (General Forest Management Area) land during the summer of 2002.

Superior Lumber Co. has an alternate access on Windy Creek, which would not pass through federal lands, but the steepness of the slopes would require construction of midslope roads and switchbacks. These activities have the potential to be more damaging to the environmental resources than the proposal across public land. Superior Lumber Co. has been helicopter logging portions of their land in the Poorman drainage where there is limited road access.

The purpose of the proposed action is to allow Superior Lumber Co. access to their land in the most efficient and environmentally sound manner. This is consistent with 43 CFR § 2812.0-6 (a) which states that "The intermingled character of the O. and C. lands presents peculiar problems of management which require for their solution the cooperation between the Federal Government and the owners of the intermingled lands, particularly with respect to timber roads."

1.2 Plan Conformance

The proposed activities are in conformance with and are tiered to the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (S&M ROD)(USDI, USDA 2001) and the *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (USDI 1995). These Resource Management Plans incorporate the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (NWFP) (USDA and USDI 1994). These documents are available at the Medford BLM office and the Medford BLM web site at <<http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford/>>.

1.3 Decisions to be Made Based on This Analysis

The Glendale Resource Area Field Manager must decide:

- 1) Whether or not the impacts of the proposed action are significant to the human environment beyond those impacts addressed in previous NEPA documents. (If the impacts are determined to be insignificant, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) can be issued and a decision can be implemented. If any impacts are determined to be significant to the human environment, then an Environmental Impact Statement must be prepared before the Manager makes a decision).
- 2) Whether to implement the proposed action, or defer to the no action alternative.
- 3) Determine whether the selected alternative is consistent with the Resource Management Plan.

Chapter 2 - Alternatives

2.0 Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the proposed action alternative and the No Action alternative. This chapter also outlines specific project design features that are an essential part of the project design.

2.1 Alternative 1: (Proposed Action) Issue temporary right-of-way permits and to construct haul roads.

Alternative 1 proposes to issue two short term right-of-way permits (43 CFR § 2812.0-7 (h)) to Superior Lumber Co. to construct and utilize a road approximately 840 feet long in Windy Creek and another road approximately 300 feet long in Poorman Creek. The running surfaces will be 14 feet wide with an additional 8' feet given to each side for clearing of vegetation. The total width of the road corridors would be 30' wide except as noted in Project Design Features listed below. The proposed road location in Windy Creek follows an existing ridge top fire trail and would not require cutting commercial size conifers. The proposed road location in Poorman Creek would require cutting approximately 11 commercial size conifers on the edge of an existing young plantation.

Approximately 1,000 thousand board feet (MBF) would be hauled over the Windy Creek proposed road and approximately 2,000 MBF on the proposed Poorman Creek road during the summer of 2002.

2.1.1 Project Design Features

Project Design Features (PDFs) are specific measures included in the design of the proposed action to minimize negative impacts on the human environment. Many project design features for projects in the Medford District are specified in the RMP under Best Management Practices (BMP) as described in Appendix D of the RMP (RMP pp 152-165).

The following Project Design Features (PDFs) would be implemented:

- * Protect known site of *Buxbaumia viridis* in Windy Creek (this bryophyte species has been identified within 25' of existing fire trail)
 - No disturbance would occur within the area flagged around this species
 - No brushing would occur along 200' of road near plant and activities would be limited to the 14' wide running surface.
- * 4 inch lift of rock would be put on the road surface for erosion control
- * Bare soil areas would be mulched with material free of noxious weeds
- * Water dips would be installed where appropriate
- * Hauling would occur from May 15 through October 15 of the same year, and would

be discontinued during periods of wet weather. However, On the existing 33-7-13.7 road in Poorman Creek, hauling would not occur prior to July 1 to adequately protect the nesting activities of the northern spotted owl, unless biologists determine nesting has occurred or the young have fledged and left the nest

- * Heavy equipment would be washed, prior to entry on federal land, to remove soil and plant parts to reduce the spread of noxious weeds and disease into the project area.
- * Road construction would include outsloping the road surface and installing water dips to reduce maintenance requirements and to reduce erosion that might otherwise occur.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the no Action Alternative, the BLM would continue present management activities. The short term right-of-way permits to Superior Lumber Co. to construct roads and haul logs through BLM land would not be issued.

Chapter 3 - Environmental Consequences

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the relevant resource components of the existing environment and also provides the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons in Chapter II (40 CFR § 1502.16). Environmental consequences analyzed are specific to each of the alternatives. The two locations for construction of permanent roads on BLM managed O&C lands are within the Windy Creek drainage in T. 32 S., R. 6 W., Section 24; and T. 33 S., R. 7 W., Section 23, Douglas County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian.

Table 3.1 Critical Elements by Alternative The following elements of the human environment are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order and must be considered in all EA's. (Y=yes N=no)

Resource or Issue Affected by Alternative	Alternative (Y or N)		Resource Affected by Alternative	Alternative (Y or N)	
	1	2		1	2
Air Quality	N	N	Threatened & Endangered Species	N	N
ACEC	N	N	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	N	N
Cultural	N	N	Water Quality	N	N
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	N	N	Riparian Zones	N	N
Floodplains	N	N	Wild & Scenic Rivers	N	N
Native American Religious Concerns	N	N	Wilderness	N	N
Invasive Species	N	N	Environmental Justice	N	N
Energy	N	N			
Other Elements			Alternatives Affected (Y or N)		
			1	2	
Survey and Manage Species			Y	N	
Essential Fish Habitat			N	N	

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects were considered.

Direct effects are site-specific and result from the immediate action, such as the harvest of a timber sale unit or the construction of a particular road. Direct effects are confined

to a specific area such as a timber sale unit, a particular elk range, or a spotted owl site, and can be short term or long term.

Indirect effects occur at a different place or time than the proposed action.

Cumulative effects are generally not site-specific and are not readily attributable to any one action. Cumulative effects are the result of past, immediate, and reasonably foreseeable actions on a larger area, such as a watershed, regardless of ownership

3.1 Survey and Manage Species (Survey and Manage)

3.1.2 Affected Environment (Survey and Manage)

The vegetation on the Windy Creek ridgeline proposed area consists of young to mature Douglas-fir, tanoak, madrone, and black oak. Just downslope to the southeast is a partial cut unit from the 1997 High Five Timber Sale. There are signs of an old fire trail along the ridgetop, although it is covered by forest canopy. The proposed activities would remove small amounts of hardwoods (madrone) and brush, with no removal of overstory conifers or late-successional habitat. A single site of *Buxbaumia viridis* (bryophyte) was found on the ridgetop near the proposed road. *Buxbaumia viridis* is a category D species as listed in the S&M ROD (p. 48) with the objective of managing known sites. The area is not likely habitat for other Special Status, and S&M vascular plants.

The affected vegetation on the Poorman proposed area is through a young plantation but includes the edge of late successional habitat.

3.1.3 Direct and Indirect Effects on Survey and Manage Species

Alternative 1

The proposed construction of the road in Windy Creek, with the implementation of the Project Design Features listed in Chapter II of this analysis, would not change microsite conditions of *Buxbaumia viridis*. An existing fire trail exists where the road would be constructed with a rock surface. Effects would be minimal to this Survey and Manage Species.

There are no anticipated adverse effects to sensitive, or survey and manage wildlife wildlife species from the proposed road construction.

Alternative 2 (No Action Alternative)

No effects would be anticipated to occur.

3.1.3 Cumulative Effects on Survey and Manage Species

No cumulative effects would be anticipated.

3.2 Threatened and Endangered Species

3.2.1 Affected Environment (Threatened and Endangered Species)

The proposed project occurs outside of the range of the listed endangered *Fritillaria gentneri*. There is an existing northern spotted owl activity site within 1/4 mile of existing 33-7-13.7 road. Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon do not currently inhabit Grave Creek or Poorman Creek (Rogue River Watershed). Oregon Coast coho salmon spawn and rear in Windy Creek and Cow Creek (Umpqua Watershed).

3.2.3 Direct and Indirect Effects on Threatened and Endangered Species

No hauling would occur prior to July 1 to adequately protect the nesting activities of the northern spotted owl, unless biologists determine nesting has occurred or the young have fledged and left the nest. Wildlife habitat would not be affected by the alternatives.

Oregon Coast coho salmon would not be affected by either proposal because both roads would be on or near ridges and several hundred yards from any stream channel. When the effects of the proposed action are added to the environmental baseline and cumulative effects elsewhere in the 5th field watershed, it is concluded that there would be no effect on OC coho salmon and its critical habitat and OC steelhead. Activities associated with this project would have less than an adverse effect on EFH for Oregon Coast coho salmon and chinook salmon.

The actions of constructing roads in Windy Creek and Poorman Creek are not interrelated or interdependent (Final ESA Section 7 Consultation Handbook, March 1998 p. 4-26) to actions that would occur on Superior Lumber Co. lands. The actions on Superior Lumber Co. lands would occur regardless of the proposed action. As mentioned in the Purpose and Need, Superior Lumber Co. has alternate access to their lands.

3.2.4 Cumulative Effects on Threatened and Endangered Species

No cumulative effects would be anticipated.

Chapter 5 - List of Agencies and Persons Consulted

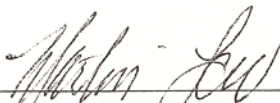
A legal notice will be placed in local newspapers to announce to the public that the Glendale Resource Area has analyzed the proposal to issue Superior Lumber Co. two short term permits to haul logs and construct permanent roads across BLM land. In addition, notification of this proposal will be sent to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, County Commissioners for the affected county, several environmental groups, and representatives of the timber industry. The Field Manager will consider all input before reaching a finding or making a decision concerning this proposal.

List of Preparers:

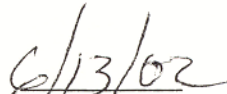
<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Primary Responsibility</u>
Loren Wittenberg	Hydrologist	Soils/Air/Water/Riparian
Michael Bornstein	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife
Martin Lew	Ecosystem Planner	NEPA
Rachel Showalter	Botanist	Plants and Fungi
Sondra Nolan	ROW Specialist	Rights-of-way
Randy Fiske	Lead Engineer	Engineering

The Proposed Action has been screened for compliance with the Endangered Species Act, The American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Historic Preservation Act, Bureau of Land Management policies related to the ecosystem objectives and concepts in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan. Furthermore, this action has been screened from a landscape perspective and there are no effects anticipated from this action that would foreclose future management options in relation to the watershed management objectives identified through Watershed Analysis.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.



Ecosystem Planner
Reviewed for format and consistency



Date

References

USDI-BLM. 1995. Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan. Medford, Oregon

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 1994. Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Pacific Northwest

USDA-FS, USDI-BLM. 2001. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines. Portland, Oregon